

# **EXHIBIT C**

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI  
EASTERN DIVISION

JOHN BARNHARDT, ET AL

Plaintiffs

V.

CASE NO. 4:65-cv-1300-HTW-LGI

MERIDIAN MUNICIPAL SEPARATE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Defendant

**TRANSCRIPT OF STATUS CONFERENCE**  
**VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

BEFORE HONORABLE HENRY T. WINGATE  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

May 17, 2023  
Jackson, Mississippi

The proceedings were reported by a stenographic court reporter.  
The transcript was produced using computer-aided transcription.

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APPEARANCES:

REPRESENTING THE PLAINTIFFS:

John Spencer Cusick, Esquire  
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.  
40 Rector Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10006-1738

REPRESENTING THE DEFENDANT:

John Simeon Hooks, Esquire  
Adams and Reese  
1018 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 800  
Ridgeland, MS 39157

John G. Compton, Esquire  
Witherspoon & Compton, LLC  
1100 23rd Avenue  
Meridian, MS 39301

REPRESENTING THE INTERVENOR:

Aria Vaughan, Esquire  
Natane Singleton, Esquire  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20530

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Amy Carter, Superintendent  
Meridian Public School District

1 court might recall, was important to the community.

2 We have heard from the Department of Justice who has  
3 indicated they have no opposition to this latest idea of  
4 reconfiguring the elementary schools. And we had hoped that  
5 the Legal Defense Fund today would indicate that it has no  
6 opposition given the fact that the school district has been  
7 attempting to accommodate the desire of some members of the  
8 community to have some presence there in the building at Carver  
9 Middle School.

10 So, Your Honor, that's kind of the lay of the land. And  
11 we do have a proposed order we can submit to the court  
12 regarding the latest ideas that Dr. Carter has. And I might  
13 call upon her if she has anything to add, Your Honor, to  
14 explain in further detail or correct anything I might have  
15 said.

16 THE COURT: All right. Thank you. I have read these  
17 matters, and I will call on her in just a moment. But I want  
18 to know whether the Legal Defense Fund has any objections here.  
19 I recognize that the Department of Justice does not, so let me  
20 turn to the Legal Defense Fund.

21 MR. CUSICK: Sure. And thank you, Your Honor. And  
22 we, the Legal Defense Fund, appreciate the court's willingness  
23 to hold this status conference. We were the parties in jointly  
24 with defendants asking for that. Our position is that, as  
25 we've explained, that the pending modification motion, that one

1 that Mr. Hooks referenced first, ECF 167, that that may impact  
2 the assessment of this new reconfiguration plan.

3 And we understand and appreciate the defendant's request  
4 for us to take a position on that one. But as we've explained  
5 to them and to you, Your Honor, today that we can't do so until  
6 there's a ruling on that first motion to see if Carver Middle  
7 School was properly closed, because some of the justifications,  
8 at least from our understanding, on some of the reconfiguration  
9 plans here might have different interests and might at some  
10 points be a little bit in tension with some of the  
11 justifications proposed previously that you heard at the  
12 evidentiary hearing.

13 And so I think the purpose of us asking for the status  
14 conference today was just to see if Your Honor had any  
15 questions on that initial pending motion before you resolve  
16 that. And then we are happy to, once that's resolved, to fully  
17 be able to assess the proposed second modification here  
18 relating to the elementary schools.

19 THE COURT: So then you want to hear the court's  
20 ruling on the middle school before we start talking about the  
21 elementary school; is that so?

22 MR. CUSICK: Yes, Your Honor.

23 THE COURT: All right. And with regard to the middle  
24 school, you are still opposed to the actions taken by the  
25 school system relative to the middle school; is that so?